

of America cares about the form of government in Russia, that we believe in the universal values embedded in democracy. We believe in rule of law; we believe in human rights; we believe everybody has a right to be treated equally.

I explained to them that our own government and our country took a while to evolve, but nevertheless, it's important to be aiming toward a better tomorrow.

I hope my visit here was encouraging to them; it certainly was instructional for me. I explained to them my strategy of dealing with Vladimir Putin, who is my friend. Some asked me to deliver messages, which I'd be more than happy to do. I explained to them that it's in the U.S. interests to remain engaged with Russia—Russia is a great country with a fantastic future—and that the foreign policy of my administration will be to work with Russia to solve common problems and at the same time be in a position where we can have a frank exchange of ideas and philosophies and views.

I told the young leaders here that this has been a very enriching experience for me. I shared the thought—shared the idea that I'm the father of 24-year-old twin daughters. I'm looking at some folks here at the table who are their age; I'm impressed by their courage and their idealism and their desire to make their societies a better place.

So I want to thank you all for your visit. Thank you for your frank exchanges. I will you all the very best, and I ask for God's blessings on the people of Russia.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:06 p.m. at the Counsel General's residence. In his remarks, he referred to U.S. Ambassador to Russia William J. Burns; and President Vladimir Putin of Russia. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Statement Honoring Former President Gerald Ford's Birthday *July 14, 2006*

President Gerald Ford's story is a true American story. It is the tale of a son of the Midwest who achieved great things through hard work, dedication, courage, and humility. President Ford played football at Michigan,

received a law degree from Yale, served in the Navy during World War II, and for decades he represented western Michigan as a Republican Congressman from Grand Rapids.

Then came his appointment with history. He assumed the Presidency at a perilous moment for our country. A President had resigned; the United States was involved in a cold war; the economy was sputtering; and America's confidence was deeply shaken.

Few leaders have ever faced such challenges upon taking office. Yet President Ford met them with steadfastness and courage. His leadership helped heal a wounded nation.

Since leaving office, President Ford has set a high standard for grace and character. He has never forgotten his roots or lost sight of the things that matter—including his deep love for his wife and partner, Betty.

Laura and I join all Americans in wishing President Ford a happy birthday.

Digest of Other White House Announcements

The following list includes the President's public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this issue.

July 8

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

July 10

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the evening, in the State Dining Room and the East Room, the President and Mrs. Bush hosted a social dinner and entertainment in honor of the Special Olympics.

The President announced his designation of the following individuals as members of a Presidential delegation to Abuja, Nigeria, to attend the Leon H. Sullivan Summit on July 19: Alphonso Jackson (head of delegation); John Campbell; John A. Simon; Herbert H. Lusk II; and Anita Smith.